

Amendments to the Claims

1-18. (Cancelled)

19. (New) A method comprising:

establishing a radio link layer connection between a radio access network and a wireless communication device, wherein the radio access network applies a radio link timer to the radio link connection, wherein the radio access network provides connectivity with a packet-switched network;

establishing a data-link layer connection over which data can be communicated between the wireless communication device and the radio access network;

detecting that the wireless communication device has neither sent nor received packet-based real-time media over the data-link layer connection for a threshold period of time; and

responsive to the detecting, sending from the wireless communication device into the radio access network at least one keepalive signal, wherein the at least one keepalive signal resets the radio link timer,

wherein sending the keepalive signal into the radio access network comprises sending the keepalive signal into the radio access network for transmission of the keepalive signal, in turn, from the radio access network to a destination in the packet-switched network.

20. (New) The method of claim 19, wherein the destination in the packet-switched network is a communication server that bridges voice-over-packet communications between the wireless communication device and one or more other devices.

21. (New) The method of claim 19, wherein the wireless communication device includes a push-to-talk button.

22. (New) The method of claim 19, wherein sending at least one keepalive signal comprises periodically sending keepalive signals.

23. (New) The method of claim 22, wherein the radio link timer defines a radio-link timeout period, and wherein periodically sending keepalive signals comprises:
sending keepalive signals at a period that is shorter than the radio-link timeout period.

24. (New) The method of claim 19, wherein, the wireless communication device communicates with the radio access network over a radio-link, and wherein sending at least one keepalive signal into the radio access network comprises:
sending keepalive signals into the radio-access network in order to hold open the radio link layer connection.

25. (New) The method of claim 19, wherein the keepalive signal comprises packet-data.

26. (New) The method of claim 19, wherein the keepalive signal is an empty Real-time Transport Protocol (RTP) packet.

27. (New) A system for maintaining a radio link assigned to a cellular mobile station, the system comprising:

means for detecting that the cellular mobile station has neither sent nor received packet-based real-time media for a threshold period of time; and

means, responsive to the detecting, for sending from the cellular mobile station into a radio access network at least one keepalive signal,

wherein the radio access network applies a radio link timer to the radio link connection and provides connectivity with a packet-switched network, wherein sending of the keepalive signal causes the radio link timer to be reset, and

wherein sending the keepalive signal into the radio access network comprises sending the keepalive signal into the radio access network for transmission of the keepalive signal, in turn, from the radio access network to a destination in the packet-switched network.

28. (New) The system of claim 27, wherein the destination in the packet-switched network is a communication server that bridges voice-over-packet communications between the wireless communication device and one or more other devices.

29. (New) The system of claim 27, wherein the cellular mobile station includes a push-to-talk button.

30. (New) The system of claim 27, wherein sending at least one keepalive signal comprises periodically sending keepalive signals.

31. (New) The system of claim 30, wherein the radio link timer defines a radio-link timeout period, and wherein periodically sending keepalive signals comprises:

sending keepalive signals at a period that is shorter than the radio-link timeout period.

32. (New) The system of claim 27, wherein the keepalive signal comprises packet-data.

33. (New) The method of claim 19, wherein the keepalive signal is an empty Real-time Transport Protocol (RTP) packet.

34. (New) A cellular mobile station comprising:

a processor; and

a wireless communication interface,

wherein the processor is programmed to make a determination that the cellular mobile station has neither send nor received real-time media over a data-link layer connection for a threshold period of time, and

wherein the processor is programmed to respond to the determination by sending at least one keepalive signal via the wireless communication interface into a radio access network, wherein the radio access network provides connectivity with a packet-switched network,

whereby sending a keepalive signal from the cellular mobile station into the radio access network causes the radio access network to reset a radio-link timeout timer for a radio link assigned to the cellular mobile station, and

wherein sending the keepalive signal into the radio access network comprises sending the keepalive signal into the radio access network for transmission of the keepalive signal, in turn, from the radio access network to a destination in the packet-switched network.

35. (New) The cellular mobile station of claim 34, wherein the destination in the packet-switched network is a communication server that bridges voice-over-packet communications between the cellular mobile station and one or more other devices.

36. (New) The cellular mobile station of claim 34, further comprising a push-to-talk button.

37. (New) The cellular mobile station of claim 9, wherein the processor is programmed to periodically send keepalive signals into the radio access network in response to the determination.

38. (New) The cellular mobile station of claim 37, wherein the radio-link timeout timer has a timeout period, and wherein the processor is programmed to send the keepalive signals into the radio access network at a period that is shorter than the timeout period.

39. (New) A communication system comprising:
a mobile station having a processor, data storage, a user interface, a push-to-talk button, and a wireless communication interface;

a radio access network that communicates with the mobile station over an air interface and that provides connectivity between the mobile station and a packet-switched network, wherein a communication server sits on the packet-switched network and functions to bridge voice-over-packet communications between the mobile station and one or more other devices, wherein the radio access network is arranged to establish a radio link layer connection with the mobile station over the air interface and to release the radio link layer connection after a predefined period of time during which no packet-data is communicated to or from the mobile station over a data link layer connection via the air interface;

wherein the mobile station is arranged (i) to detect that no packet data has been sent to or from the mobile station for a threshold period of time that is less than the predefined period of time, and (ii) to responsively transmit packet data as a keepalive signal over the air interface to reset the radio link timer, wherein the mobile station sends the packet data as the keepalive signal to the radio access network for transmission in turn from the radio access network to a communication server on the packet-switched network.